

# Model Railroading for Kids; One Approach to Bringing “New Blood” Into the Hobby

*by Alan Mende*

**W**e’ve all heard the wailing and gnashing of teeth before; our hobby is aging. How do we attract “new blood” to it? Well, you and I both know the answer to the aging of the hobby – children. Children are our future, whether in regard to a hobby or almost anything else.

For the past two years, a group of my friends and I have taught model railroading as part of the South Hanover (PA) Elementary School After School Program. This program, sponsored by the South Hanover Township Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), offers many different classes and activities for the children of the elementary school. Knowing my interest in model railroading, one of our neighbors, Mrs. Holly Ray, asked me in the latter part of 2001 if I would be interested in teaching the sub-

ject to kids. There would be four, one-hour classes spread out over four weeks. I could say that “in a moment of weakness” I accepted the challenge. But to be honest, with all the hand wringing over declining NMRA membership, I could lead this class as my small contribution to a hobby

that has given me so much enjoyment ever since I was an elementary school kid.

Of course, in accepting the responsibility of teaching such a class, as a former public school teacher, I was going to have to come up with a course of action, if not actual lesson plans and all of that stuff that I used to do when I taught wood

shop and mechanical drawing at Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, Virginia. Holly told me that the class

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## MER LOCAL

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The MER LOCAL welcomes articles, photographs and model railroad related material as contributions to members' mutual enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. Editors will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send originals without having back-up copies of both articles and photographs. Editors, by definition, reserve the right—and have the responsibility—to make corrections, deletions and changes to accommodate space.

## Keeping In Touch...

by Rita Lynam  
MER Business Manager

So glad that we are out of the winter months. It certainly was a harsh winter. For someone with a walker, the snow and ice made it very difficult to traverse the landscape. The other item that made our winter worse than usual was my husband was hospitalized for 2 full weeks—during the blizzard of '03. I apologize for any delay in response to your emails or phone calls but it was a very hard January, February, and March and challenging for me. Working every day and heading to the hospital made for long days. Since my husband is my legs, it took a while for me to get my MER work "back on track." Appreciate all the out-reaching of members to Ray and me during this time. We have true friends in the MER!

At the Richmond Convention last spring, we met new members who were seated at our table at the awards banquet. One of those people was Safaa Al-Abdulla. It was his first convention and he was really having a great time. He said he had learned a lot of things in the clinics and had enjoyed his first convention. We were saddened to learn in March that Safaa had terminal cancer and had died. Life is precious! We should enjoy each day to the fullest. That means we need to make the time to enjoy our hobby. Remember that the next time you work on your layout or structures.

Spring is here so if anyone in the Divisions needs copies of The Local, give me a couple weeks notice, and I will send them for your use. You can also contact the National organization and ask for issues of the Bulletin to have on display at your registration tables.

Don't forget to let me know if your address changes. We want you to receive your Local. Any questions or comments, please contact me at my address on the masthead.

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(see page 12)

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# President's Column

*Norm Garner*

The State of the MER at present... is winter ever going to get over? This has been the longest and coldest winter with more snow and rain that I can remember in a long time.

I hope this has inspired many of you to work on your layouts, modules and build some models for the up coming convention. This is the only convention that the MER is having this year since the MER/BOD voted, by popular support, to have only one convention a year.

I spoke with Bob Minnis recently who is the Chairman of the POTOMAC JUNCTION 2003 convention. Bob states everything is on track for a great convention. This convention will be held in Reston Virginia on October 10-13, 2003. I hope every Division in the MER will get behind this convention and make it a success. The number and quality of the layout tours alone are worth attending this convention.

The MER car sale is doing well. We have sold out of the ANCHOR tank car, and for the first time are offering an N-Scale Western Maryland boxcar. I hope all of the N-scalers out there support this because you have been asking the MER for years to sell an N-scale car. I want to thank Roger Cason, Car Project Chairman, for doing an outstanding job for the MER and P.J. Mattson for making this project such a success.

The MER is holding its own with recruiting new members. I want to thank every division superintendent and all of the people involved in keeping our numbers up. The Potomac Division has done a great job in getting new members and retaining members. The MER is made up of volunteers who work very hard like Alan Mende our Local Editor, Clint Hyde Local Publisher and Rita Lynam our Business Manager. The most important people are you the members that make up the MER. Without you this organization would not survive. I feel that the NMRA is going through a very difficult transition with regards to dues, services, and restructuring. The long-range plans for the one-dues pay is still on going by the BOT/NMRA. Some of the opinions of the trustees have stated that some of the regions may have to have other ways to make up funds that may be lost by a new one-dues pay system. I hope this does not occur because the organization as a whole is having a hard time maintaining membership numbers already lost by the last dues increased.

Hoping that each and every one of you has a good spring and summer. Remember model railroading is fun.

## Upcoming MER Conventions

2003 — Potomac Division. Sheraton Reston, Northern Virginia. Columbus Day weekend.

2004 — South Mountain Division. Hagerstown, MD, at the same place as last time.

## Achievement Program Attaboys

*By Roger Cason, MMR*

Since my last report in *The Local*, the people listed below have been awarded the following Achievement Program certificates:

### **Division 1 – New Jersey**

Peter N. Butler – Engineer - Electrical

Peter N. Butler – Engineer - Civil

### **Division 2 – Potomac**

Mark Andersen – Volunteer

### **Division 4 – Tidewater**

James J. Curth – Volunteer

Chuck Davis – Master Builder - Cars

### **Division 11 – Susquehanna**

Bruce Allison – Golden Spike

### **Division 13 – Carolina Piedmont**

David Derway – Golden Spike

In a perfect world, all these names will appear in the **NMRA Bulletin**. This should not deter you from recognizing them locally. Normally you will be able to recognize an accomplishment long before the name appears in the **Bulletin**.

## New Blood for Model Railroading

would be made up of kindergarten through fifth graders, though I could set the limit of how many kids I could teach. The room I would use could accommodate twenty-five, so I told her that's how many kids could enroll.

Now, what model railroading activities are appropriate for five- through ten-year-old children? I was sure they could all assemble a simple freight car like one from Athearn. I was also sure they would be able to assemble a Woodland Scenics tree. Some might need more help than others, but with the right number of volunteers – parents of the children or fellow model railroaders – I was certain they could succeed. Those two activities would probably fill two of the four hours of the class. What should I do for the rest of the time? I decided that an overview of model railroading would be an appropriate starting point and that I could introduce the kids

to our hobby by showing them a videotape or two and by giving them some hand-outs that are available from Kalmbach publications. I was still wondering what to do for the last class when I started contacting some of my friends to ask them if they would volunteer an hour a week for four weeks to help me out. Among my volunteers was Terry Nesbit of Susquehanna Division 11 of the Mid-Eastern Region – my division and region.

He suggested that he could bring in the division's HO-scale modules so we could show the children a complete operating model railroad on the last day of class. Not only could they see it, they would be allowed to operate trains on it as well. Of course I accepted Terry's suggestion! There was no way we were going to be able to take 25 kids to see an operating model railroad, so what better way was there to expose them to our hobby than to bring one to them?

With class number four set up, I set to work preparing for the first three. Holly told me that the PTO would be able to cover reasonable expenses. But since they would be funding cooking classes, woodworking classes, and many others as well, I figured I'd try to get at least some of the class materials donated. I knew that Kalmbach would help. I called

their Customer Service line, told them what kind of class I would be teaching, and they offered to send me brochures on model and prototype railroading. When I asked if they had any promotional videotapes available, they said no, but suggested I contact the NMRA's Kalmbach Memorial Library. Well, I was planning on doing that anyway because I'm not the first person to ever teach model railroading to elementary school kids. The library had to have some resources that I could use.

They very kindly sent me photocopies of articles about the subject and suggested that I contact Pentrex about videotapes. While they didn't have an actual introduction to model railroading video, Pentrex did offer to donate the tape they produced for the Boy Scout Model Railroading Merit Badge. That would work. And since I have a number of layout tour videotapes that were offered by Kalmbach some years ago, I'd bring them into class also. Two classes



planned, two to go.

**A**thearn freight cars aren't all that expensive, but when you multiply the cost of one by twenty-five, the amount is considerable. So I sent them a quick e-mail note explaining what I was going to be doing and who was funding the class. I asked if the company would be willing to either donate 25

freight cars or make them available at a reduced cost that wouldn't put an undue burden on the PTO. I also requested that if they made the kits available would they please send them directly to the school so they knew I wasn't some con artist who was just trying to build up a freight car roster on his own model railroad. No problem, Athearn would be happy to donate 25 freight car kits to South Hanover Elementary School. Wow!

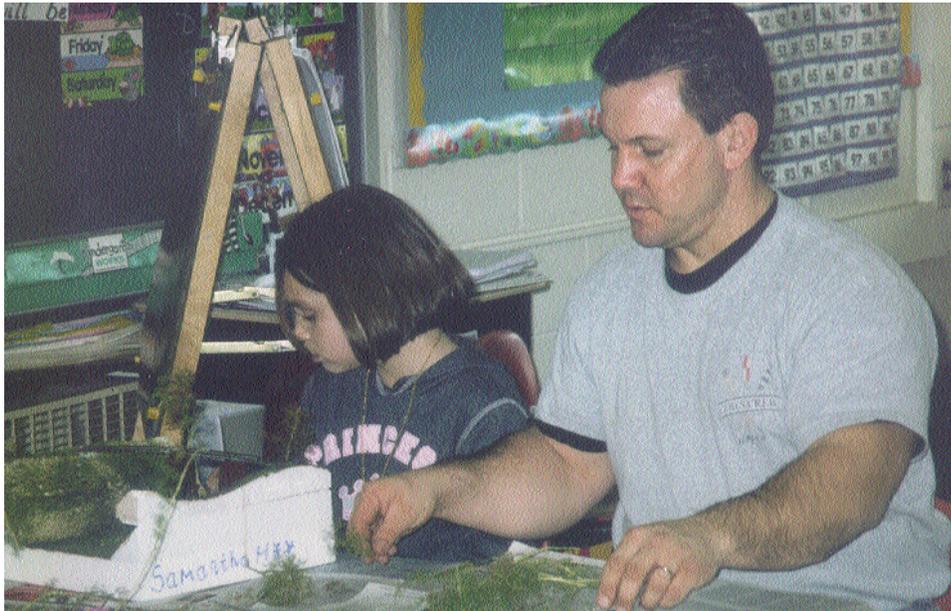
What fine folks! I made the same request of Woodland Scenics and Ruean Holt of the company responded as positively and enthusiastically as my contact at Athearn. She would see to it that a shipment of tree-making materials was sent to the school as well.

Now all I had to do was gather tools and all the various and



sundry things that we model railroaders already have around the house. You know the basic tools used to build “shake-the-box” models – a small file, a screwdriver, some cement, an Xacto knife. That last one set off alarm bells and ran up red flags. Not only can kids easily hurt themselves with “sharps,” there might be prohibitions against bringing such tools into a school. I crossed the Xacto knife off the list of needed tools and added a sprue cutter – a little bit safer in small hands. But I still called the school to check if it would be all right for me to bring the tools to school.

Then came the monkey wrenches. You know the ones that get thrown into the machinery to make things not run smoothly. When the freight car kits from Athearn arrived at the school, they were passed on to me. On opening the shipping carton, I found that all of the kits were gondolas. (Hmm, maybe I forgot to request *assorted* types of freight car kits.)



Having 25 gondolas wasn’t the monkey wrench. But even in the hands of a kindergartner, a kit as simple as an Athearn gondola isn’t going to take an hour to build. How am I going to occupy the rest of their time? Let’s have them build a load for their gondolas. It has to be simple, yet somewhat time consuming. It has to be cheap because I’ll buy the raw materials. And it can’t need tools and supplies that might not be appropriate in the hands of a five-year-old. (Think razor blades, Xacto knives, and super glue.) Telephone poles! I bought dowels, cut enough of them (16 for each gondola) to length, and stained them. I also cut up a bunch of strip wood for blocking between the layers of poles (nine pieces for each load) and lengths of soft floral wire to “band” the poles together. Then I distributed the load materials in the 25 kit boxes.

**N**ow I don’t know how fast you could assemble that telephone pole load, but I knew it would take the kids longer than about 30 minutes if I just handed them 27 pieces of wood and wire and told them to build a load...without glue—either slow-drying, non-toxic white glue or fast-drying, glue-your-fingers-to-the-table super glue. So I built several load assembly fixtures that were wide enough to capture the dowels. After placing the two pieces of floral wire in the bottom of the fixture, the kids would put the first layer of four dowels in. Next I’d have the kids put down some double-sided tape on top of the dowels,

place three pieces of blocking, add more double-sided tape on top of them, and then drop in the next layer of dowels. They’d repeat that exercise until they used up all of their materials. Then they could bend the floral wire up and around the stack of dowels and twist the ends together with the help of a small pliers. *Voila!* Mass-produced telephone pole loads. Yeah, I know that telephone poles taper and dowels don’t, and yeah, the quarter-inch dowels that I used scale out larger than prototypical poles, but my class of five-to ten-year-olds wasn’t the place for 100% fidelity to the prototype.

I had no sooner pulled this monkey wrench out of the works when another one dropped in. The third class would be devoted to tree building to introduce the kids to scenery. Well, one tree does not a scenicked layout make. And it

wouldn’t take an hour to make a tree. We all know that scenery building takes time – more than we could devote to it in class. But I wanted to show the kids how it was done, so I liberated a two-by-four-foot piece of rigid Styrofoam board from my basement to use as a lightweight scenic base. With more Styrofoam, I roughed in a raised roadbed and the beginnings of some landforms. I also cut up a bunch of one-inch-wide strips of corrugated cardboard and bought a roll of plaster cloth. Together with these materials, I gathered up my scenery tools (hot glue gun, a shallow plastic pan for wetting plaster cloth, and paint brushes) and supplies – ground foam, ballast material brown latex paint, “wet water,” and thinned acrylic matte medium in a spray bottle.

In the course of preparing for my classes, I almost forgot one of the most important items any class filled with 25 children could have – adult volunteers. Friends Terry Nesbit and Gene Nissley had already volunteered to help me. And Holly Ray told me that she would see to it that we had at least one other adult present – probably a parent of one of the kids in the class. As the first day of class approached, Holly called me to run through how after school classes were held in the school, how I was to check in at the office to get a visitor’s ID, and to check if I needed any special equipment like a TV and a VCR. Thank you, Holly, for raising that last point. Had I walked into the first

class armed with videotapes with no equipment in the classroom to show them, my credibility as a teacher of model railroading would go down the tube.

With all the nervousness of a student teacher on the first day of his assignment, I entered South Hanover Elementary School at 3:30 PM on January 23, 2002. My volunteers met me in the classroom, and we readied our materials. Almost immediately thereafter, the kids started arriving, jabbering and animated as kids always are in large groups. I introduced my volunteers and myself and gave the kids a short overview of what we would be doing over the next four Wednesday afternoons. An ocean of hands waved in front of me – each one connected to a burning question that a child wanted to ask. Things settled down for the videotapes, and I think the kids received them well. Afterwards, I asked them questions about what they had seen. Another ocean of waving hands. (I never got that kind of response when I taught high school wood shop.) Then as the end of the class approached, I picked three kids to pass out the brochures from Kalmbach and reminded everyone that during the next class we'd be building freight car models. Gee, that wasn't as nerve wracking an experience as I thought it would be. Bring on class number two!

**T**he second class – the one where we built gondolas and loads – was entirely different. There were 25 kids who all wanted help from four adults at the same time. They weren't patient either. If one of my volunteers or I was helping another student attach couplers, five others would be standing behind me saying, "I need help." That's just the way it is; ask any elementary school teacher. But the kids were all involved and absolutely captivated by the exercise. I wanted to take some photographs of the class as they worked, but I never got a chance; I was just too busy going from table to table. Even with an adult at each of the four tables, that just wasn't enough for 25 children. It was very gratifying to see some of the older children helping the younger ones. They not only helped attach trucks and adjust the mounting screws, they also helped show others at their tables how to assemble the telephone pole loads. By the end of the hour, only three or four children hadn't built their gondola load. I asked them to bring them back the next week to finish them.



As I had expected, tree making didn't take an entire class period, so as children finished theirs, I called them over to where I would demonstrate scenery building. They packed in around me so closely that I had to ask them to back up a bit so I had enough elbow room to move. While I hadn't planned on letting the kids try their hands at laying plaster cloth over the lattice of corrugated strips that made up the skeleton of a hill, they all asked, so why not. We probably put twice as much plaster cloth on the scenic forms as necessary, but we had to give everybody a chance. I did the same thing with painting the stark white hills with brown latex paint. They didn't really make a mess, and besides, it washes off. Any child who didn't get a chance with the paint brush got to spread various colors and textures of ground foam on the still wet paint or plant lichen bushes.

When this third class ended, very few of the children wanted to leave; they wanted to keep helping me on my sample scenery.

Due to my job responsibilities, I wasn't able to get to the fourth class much before starting time, so Terry and Gene moved the HO layout modules into the school and set them up. By the time I arrived a few minutes before the kids came, they had the layout running. I brought a couple of Stewart F3s to run on the layout,

and I had asked the children to bring their freight cars back to class so they could see them run. (A few actually remembered – but only a few.) There wasn't a pair of young eyes that day in class that wasn't wide with wonderment at the sight of an operating model railroad in their school. They wanted to touch everything (oh please, Lord, don't let one of the kids knock my prize winning CNJ F3s off the track and onto the floor). They didn't damage anything because the layout modules are built sturdily for travel. During this last class, several of the parents arrived early, not to pick up their kids, but to get a good look at the layout and tell us how wrapped up their children had become with the idea of building their own model railroads.

Fast forward to 2003. We held the class again this year. During the planning stage, we (Terry, Gene, and I) decided that a class of 25 was just too large. We reduced the size to 20. Holly Ray asked if we would also limit the class to

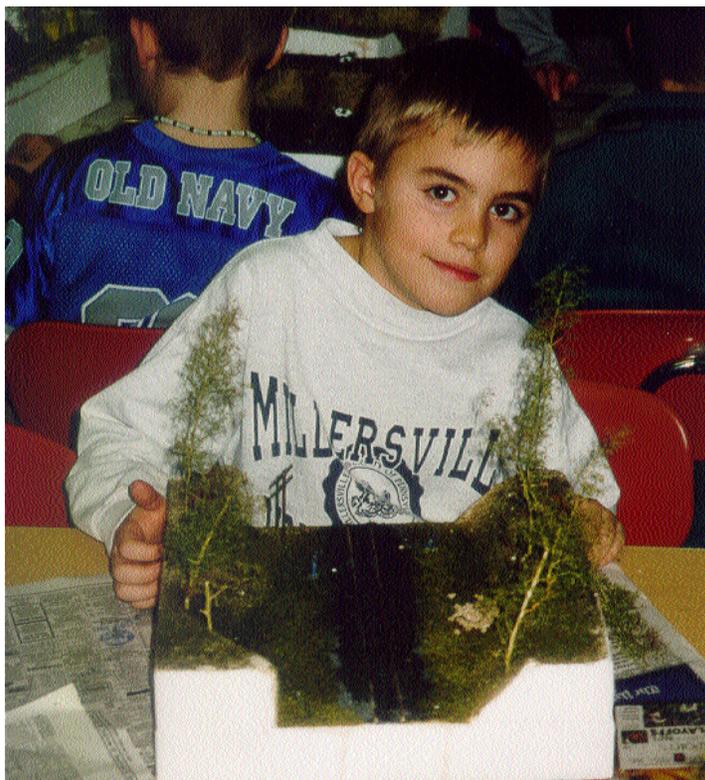
kindergarten through third grade. We decided to forego a full class period of introducing the kids to model railroading with videotapes and brochures. Instead, we started in with kit building. I asked Athearn this year if they would donate assorted freight car kits. No problem, but no one wanted the lone flat car kit. I had a few leftover telephone pole load "kits," so I brought them in for the children who had gondolas to build.

For our second and third classes, we gave each child a one-foot-square piece of two-inch thick bead board Styrofoam. I had gotten a lot of it for nothing, so the price was right. With my band saw I cut pieces of foam board in various shapes and at different angles that could be used for basic landforms. Terry supplied pieces of old brass Atlas Snap Track. We also brought in a large quantity of Scenic Express scenery materials including their really nice natural trees. Since our number of volunteers had increased this year by two, I actually had some time to snap a few pictures of the kids working on their scenery. Our biggest problem was finding a place to store 20 square feet of scenery in the classroom at the end of the second class. But we managed, and the kids were back at work adding finishing touches during the third class. Mainly, they were ballasting their track, planting trees, and placing figures that Gene and I brought in – livestock, deer, and people.

Just as in 2002, Terry brought the layout modules to school for the last day of class. I had asked that the kids bring their freight cars back to school so we could run a South Hanover Elementary freight train. They really enjoyed seeing their models run on the layout. Several of the cars needed "tune-ups" before they were ready to roll – coupler adjustments and tightening of truck screws predominated. I also made sure that every child sign a large card that I had made on my computer to send to Athearn thanking them for their kind donation of materials for our class – an activity we did the previous year as well.

After all the kids left for the day, all of my adult volunteers and I stood around and evaluated our course and discussed what lessons we had learned. Should we do it again if

asked? Yes. Are 20 children too many? Yes. How large should the class be? Ten to twelve kids. Are four, one-hour classes enough. Depends on what you hope to accomplish. Was the kindergarten to third grade age group appropriate? No, it would be better to have fourth and fifth graders only. They have more developed motor skills and (hopefully) a longer attention span, allowing us to have more complex activities. What should we consider for next year's activities? Freight car building is still a good activity. The kids loved building scenery. With fewer, but older kids, we might consider teaching them about hard-shell scenery, rock casting, more advanced tree making, and things like that. If we got some Design Preservation Models modular wall sections, with some guidance, we could let their creativity run wild in designing structures. Liquid styrene cement and perhaps even super glue would be okay in their hands (and we can always have some nail polish remover on hand in case someone gets stuck to something they shouldn't be stuck to). The modular layout is still a great idea, but we should make up a sheet asking them to look for certain



things on it, kind of like a scavenger hunt. It will "slow them down" and force them to look closely at the layout. Hey, could we have teams of two or three kids build complete modules that could be included in the layout? What other companies could we solicit for donations? What about asking the members of Susquehanna Division 11 to donate modeling supplies and materials? Could we arrange for local hobby shops to underwrite the cost of our class? Our brainstorming continued for quite a while.

So that's how we have attempted to fire up kids about model railroading. We have to keep in mind, however, that this is not a short-term solution to the graying of the hobby or the decline in NMRA membership. As these kids enter adolescence, their interests are going to change. They are going to become interested in the opposite sex, cars, sports, college, etc. But as they enter adulthood and begin to consider leisure time activities, we can only hope that they will remember with fondness their experiences with model railroading and pick up where they left off when they were kids. After all, that's how many of us got started in the hobby.

# Say Cheese!

The MER board has asked Pete Shatswell of the James River Division, MER, NMRA to accept the position of MER Photography Contest Chairperson and he has accepted. Pete has a wide range of experience in photography, both in the field, in retailing, and in lab work. While out of commercial photography for many years now, he still has contact with the hobby by hosting a monthly digital photography SIG for the Fredericksburg Personal Computer Users Group.

There will be a complete review of the MER photography contest rules, including if and where changes are needed to bring them up to date. Ideas for better displaying of the pictures, increasing participation, etc. will be investigated as well. While there will be an initial drive to review the current program, a continuing process is also planned to try to keep the activities current.

Input is needed regarding any changes the members might like to see to increase the participation and enjoyment of this fascinating area of the railroading hobbies. Pete will be reviewing rules and other ideas from within the region and all of its divisions as well as from other groups that sponsor photography contests. He is open to hearing any suggestions or ideas, so here's your chance to help expand the enjoyment of rail photography activities.

Please send your suggestions or suggested rule changes and experiences (positive or negative) to Pete for his review and consideration. Via e-mail, contact him at [Pasowl@aol.com](mailto:Pasowl@aol.com). (Please put MER in the subject line.) By postal mail, send your suggestions, etc. to Pete Shatswell, 12312 West Catharpin Road, Spotsylvania, VA 22553. Pete plans on being at the fall convention to gather additional ideas and discussions, but please send your thoughts to him ASAP.

## MER Car For Sale: A Western Maryland N Scale Box Car

By Roger L. Cason, MMR

Yes. That's right. We said N-scale!

As a service to members and as a modest fund raiser, the MER has offered a series of region-related freight cars for sale. Until now, all offerings have been in HO scale. We want to serve as many members as we can, and we are now trying an N-scale offering. The order form appears elsewhere in this issue.

The car in question is a 40-foot Western Maryland Railway box car – a Micro-Trains body custom painted by The Freight Yard. The car is box car red with prominent Western Maryland "speed lettering". Two numbers are being offered. A picture of the prototype appears at the bottom of page 22 of WM Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment. The usual dimensional description is on page 68 of the 1953 ORER. The prototype cars were numbered 29201-29300, were built in 1949, and commonly stayed in service until the middle 1970's.



Photo courtesy of The Freight Yard.

Model Railroading is fun!

# Achievement Program - Part Three

By Charlie Flichman

Let's continue in our search to find your entry point into the Achievement Program (AP). This month we'll look at the Master Builder – Cars category. As with the previous articles, I will briefly cover the requirements and add some notes to help in the categories with which I have familiarity. To get all of the details, go to the NMRA website at [www.nmra.org/achievement/](http://www.nmra.org/achievement/) or contact Roger Cason (address on page 2) for the same information.

The requirements for Master Builder – Cars are:

1. Build eight operable scale models of railroad cars.
2. The eight cars must be of at least four different types with at least one car being a passenger car.
3. Four of the eight cars must be scratchbuilt.
4. Four of the eight cars have to earn a Merit Award.
5. Submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ). (More about this in a future article)

You must build four super-detailed and four scratchbuilt cars of at least four different types with one being a passenger car. Car type means box, reefer, stock, tank, gondola, passenger, maintenance-of-way, etc. You must earn four Merit Awards for any four of your cars. By scoring 87.5 points out of 125 possible points in a judged contest, you earn a Merit Award. If you don't want to enter a contest, an AP person can come to your location and do the judging there. The other four cars do not have to be judged! They do have to be described in detail for the SOQ.

Having served as an MER and National contest judge, I can offer some hints. You will have to provide the same paperwork if the AP person is coming to your location. If you are just starting a model that you are going to have judged for a Merit Award, keep a record of what you are doing. Rather than trying to remember everything at the end of a modeling project, keeping a record as you build the model will help you in preparing the Judge's Score Sheet when you are finished building. You have to tell the judges what you have done; they aren't mind readers! I have seen models in a contest, with a BLANK Judge's Score Sheet. I am not sure what the modeler expected. If you are not familiar with the Judge's Score Sheet, copies of the form can be downloaded from the NMRA website. Look for the title, "AP Forms Page". This way you can also have your Judge's Score Sheet

filled out before you come to the contest room. You can use a separate piece of paper or two (not more, if possible) and just write "see attached sheet" on the Judge's Score Sheet.

The **Conformity** category on the Judge's Score Sheet is worth a total of 25 points. When you submit a model for judging, never assume that the judges will know the prototype. It is advisable to provide some plan, photo of the car, etc. to verify that what you have done conforms to prototype practice. Some comments that you put in one category (example – **Detail**) may need to be repeated in one of the other categories (example – **Scratchbuilding**). You can substitute any of the category names in both places above. Judges usually only read the category that they are judging. Also, talk to the judges after the contest awards if you don't understand the scoring or the comments. I see very few people take advantage of this situation.

Here again appears that term "scratchbuilt." I am sure that the commercial market does not produce every piece of equipment for the railroad you are modeling. Therefore, you have a reason to scratchbuild a piece of rolling stock for your railroad. Listed in the detailed description of this category are the parts that are excluded from the scratchbuilt requirements. Scratchbuilding is not that hard. There are numerous articles that have been written on scratchbuilding that you can follow to learn the techniques.

If you have access to back issues of the **NMRA Bulletin**, an excellent article to read is "Merit Award Winning Cars" by David Halpern, MMR in the March 1992 issue. This article is also on the NMRA website under the "Masters" category and includes a lot of good information.

Yes, the Master Builder – Cars category is a challenge and takes a little bit of work. But, no more than you may have already done by assembling some of the craftsman's kits on the market. Once that first model earns a Merit Award, perhaps is pictured in **The Local**, and you get comments and questions from your fellow modelers, it will be hard to resist entering the second model. If you are already doing this level of modeling, get public recognition for it. Good luck on your effort!

## Recently Deceased Members

Safaa Al-Abdulla, Glen Allen, VA. Joined NMRA in 2001 #124492. Joined MER in 2001 #7864.

Albert J Groshans, Chapel Hill, NC. Born April 1925. Joined NMRA in 1946 #L00669. Joined MER in 1946 #L-143.

Walter E Olt, Baltimore, MD. Born June 1924, died October 11, 2002. Joined NMRA in 1946 #001618. Joined MER in 1946 #L-169.

Art Thomas, former editor of **The Local**, April, 2003.

We send our sympathy to the family members of our recently deceased members.

# POTOMAC JUNCTION 2003

## October 10-13, 2003

### Reston, Virginia

October 10-13, Columbus Day weekend (yes, same weekend as Timonium--we may have a bus trip).

Venue: Sheraton Reston, Fairfax County, Virginia. It's just off the Toll Road on the Reston Parkway. \$89/night double occupancy. See the Registration form for details.

The plan: hands-on activities from end to end, including clinics and running trains. Fabulous home layout tours, a proto tour or two, maps to railfanning locations. Spouses can go to the Reston Town Center for shopping, or a movie, or someplace different to eat, with a shuttle bus provided by the hotel.

#### Extra fare clinics:

Scratchbuild with Styrene, in HO scale. Garret Nicholson. Garret is an architect, and self-confessed styrene lover ("Hello, my name is Garret and I'm a styrenaholic"). He has done this clinic before, this one primarily covers techniques, with a simpler structure. The cost is \$10, which covers the raw styrene, drawings, etc. Limit of 15 builders.

Scratchbuilding in Wood, in O scale. Martin Brechbiel. Martin has built some exquisite O-scale freight cars from scratch, in wood, and will have a kit for another one. Limit of 10 kits.

Brass kits, in N scale. Bernie Kempinski. Bernie is the creative force behind Alkem Scale Models, which has a very nice line of etched brass items. Bernie will select one of them (probably a signal tower, he says), and you'll get to build it with his expert guidance. No limit specified yet.

**BRING YOUR TOOLS!**

(these clinics will run quite a bit longer than most, probably up to 1/2 day)

#### Other clinics:

Making Trees, multiple methods. Make a tree, or two, or three, take them with you. You can't have too many trees! Unless you're modeling the Tonopah area. For the rest of us, we need a lot of trees.

Freight-car Weathering, multiple methods. Bring a freight-car or two, or three, of your own, make them look like REAL freight cars, with guidance from folks who know how.

Making open loads. Bob Minnis. Gondolas don't spend much time empty—who's making money then? So put things in them.

Making signs. Jon Percy. In Fairfax County, billboards aren't legal. Still plenty of signs, though. How to make really good ones.

<http://members.cox.net/chyde/PotomacDivision/Potomac-Junction.html>

Send registration for the convention to:

Potomac Junction  
PO Box 447  
Swedesboro, NJ 08085

The telephone number will be:

856-467-3385

**Potomac Junction 2003**  
**Mid Eastern Region, NMRA Fall Convention**  
**October 10, 11, 12, & 13, 2003**  
**Reston, Virginia**

Names as you wish to have them appear on your badges:

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Address Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

NMRA# \_\_\_\_\_ MER # \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

	Quantity		Total Cost
Full Registration (early, by Sept 1)		@ \$40.00	
Non-NMRA Member Fee		@ \$15.00	
Non-MER Member Fee		@ \$ 8.00	
Spouse		@ \$15.00	
Teenagers (12 to 16)		@ \$ 5.00	
Children (under 12)		@ \$ 0.00	
101 Styrene scratchbuilding clinic (limit 15)		@ \$10.00	
102 Wood scratchbuilding clinic (limit 10)		@ \$10.00	
103 Brass kit clinic		@ \$20.00	
401 Banquet (tentative cost)		@ \$25.00/TBD	

**Total FEES Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Make Checks payable to: **Potomac Junction 03**  
 All Activities are a la cart including the Banquet.

Payment must accompany registration form. Bounced checks will not be put through twice - you will be required to pay your entire fee by money order or cashier's check through the mail or in cash at the convention. You will be responsible for all bank fees charged. DO NOT enclose hotel room reservation requests with your registration. If you pre-register and later need to cancel, a full refund will be given only if the request is received by the registrar in writing by September 10, 2003. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for processing of your refund. DO NOT mail a registration after September 10, 2003; register at the door. DO NOT staple your check to your registration form. Call (856)-467-3385 for a recording of current changes and updates. All activities are subject to change, substitution, addition or cancellation.

The Hotel registration form information:  
 Deadline for room reservations is September 17.  
 Group name is Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA.  
 Sheraton Reston Hotel  
 Attn: Reservations  
 11810 Sunrise Valley Drive  
 Reston, VA 20191  
 Telephone reservations are accepted at  
 703-620-9000 or 800-325-3535.

The sooner you register for a room,  
 the sooner we know whether we  
 are going to have a problem about  
 insufficient room registrations.

Late registration will be \$45.

continued from page 10

## Potomac Junction continued

As you can see on the previous pages, there will be lots to do at this Fall's convention. Members of the committee and the Potomac Board are hard at work planning a great weekend of railroad activities. Now is the time to start planning your participation. The Monday Columbus Day holiday will allow most families to spend an extra day in the nation's capital participating in the MER convention or some other activity in the capital area. One could spend weeks in just the Smithsonian Museums. The hotel is located next to a major access road. The METRO is easily reached and an all-day ticket costs only \$5. The contest room will be in operation for those of you looking for AP points. The President's Award category will be a Maintenance-of-Way car. The home layout tours are going to be tops. There are several layouts in the Potomac Division area that have appeared on the covers of national magazines. We hope to have these available for convention attendees. Watch for the details in the next issue of *The Local*.

Additional standard activities will include the company store, and the raffle. Both of these will need folks to volunteer to help out, for an hour at a time, all weekend. The White Elephant table, and the auction item sign-up will likewise need volunteers.

We will once again have a minimum number of room-nights requirement we have to meet, so plan on staying around for all the activities and fellowship.

Details will be published there as they become available. Hope to see you in October.

Bob Minnis  
Chairman

### Art Thomas

I am saddened to inform you that former *Local* editor, Art Thomas, has passed away. He had been a member of the NMRA for over three decades. Art volunteered to be the *Local* editor when the MER was in a critical need for an editor. He brought with him a great deal of wisdom and experience and did an outstanding job in the short time he was the editor. He was a fine gentleman and a veteran. I am grateful that Art shared so much with the MER and that we all had the opportunity to have known him.

Norman Garner  
President  
MER

## The Veep's Corner by Clint Hyde, MER VP

### MER Elections:

Elections in 2003 are for the three Director positions.

In 2004, we will be electing Officers again. The President and Secretary are term-limited out of office this time, per the by-laws. The region needs members to step forward and run for office—in particular I want to see at least two candidates for all four positions (including mine). You know the saying, "Ask not what your Region can do for you, but what you can do for the Region." John Johnson (JJ) will be calling around, too.

Up close and personal:

I hope to visit each of the Divisions in 2003, if my schedule can work out that way. So far I've been to visit New Jersey and Carolina Piedmont Divisions. Please help me out here and keep me informed of your meetings. I'd appreciate the offer of a bed/shower for times where I need to stay overnight. I'd like the opportunity to talk to the members as a group, if that's possible; if not, I'll talk to folks individually.

**Notice to the members:** in a 1996 photo in *The Local*, I saw a couple of members with an official MER banner. Apparently that's gone, or somehow forgotten. I'll be getting a new one soon.

Other work:

As always, you are welcome to call me or email me about anything at all to do with the MER; email is preferred, I'm a computin' kinda guy. If I can help, I'll do what I can, or find out where to get more help.

I'm trying to figure out how we can make the modular layouts at the convention into a participation activity, where we can get some AP Dispatcher points (or a lot, if you want to spend the time on it). I've tasked Bruce Strickland, as the Modular coordinator, to figure out one or more Operations methodologies that work for a modular layout, and can be AP-qualified; we are going to need help testing these methods out. Potomac Junction will probably have both N and HO layouts (I've even heard a rumor of another one, but it's unclear where we'd put it), so there should be plenty of opportunity.

I can now more conveniently email the electronic version of the *LOCAL* to folks who are interested. You will continue to receive a paper copy, but with the email you'll get color photos, and it will arrive a lot sooner. Send me your email address if you are interested, [chyde@cox.net](mailto:chyde@cox.net). There will still be a 5MB size limit on what I can send. If you can, you need to get on this train, it's leaving the station at all levels of NMRA.

# Model Contests

By Ray Bilodeau, MER General Contest Chairman  
And NMRA Assistant Contest Manager

Even as I write this on the first day of April, fear not loyal readers of **The Local**, there is no April fool hunkered down in the text. I do want to remind our MER members that it is not too late to get something ready for the upcoming National convention in Toronto this July 13-20, 2003. If you plan on attending the convention, please think about bringing a photo, arts and crafts item, or a model, and enter it into one of our contests.

For an interesting read, go to the NMRA web site, [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org), and find the Contests section on the left-hand side of the home page. Scroll down and click to find the rules and regulations for all the contests and view the entry forms that can be downloaded (yes, if you need help in filling out the forms, just e-mail, write, or call me). The best part of the section is a list and description of the special awards sponsored by magazines, manufacturers, railroad historical groups, and individuals. There are modeling awards for logging themes, skillful airbrush work, kitbashing, creative photo taking, and unique crafting. A new modeling award this year is from Bar Mills, the structure manufacturer. Read about it on the web site. I will report to the membership about the contests in Toronto after the convention. I know we will have MER award winners!

Because the MER will have only one convention this year over Columbus Day weekend in Reston, Virginia, we plan on holding all our special contests and will present the awards for each. This means, for example, that the Clyde Gerald award for the best kitbashed model, which is usually given out at the spring convention, will be presented at the awards banquet at Potomac Junction.

Other awards specific to the model contest that are awarded at both spring and fall conventions will also be available for our modeling craftspeople. The President's award this time will be for the best model of an open load. The Philadelphia New Modeler Award recognizes the highest score achieved by a first time entrant in the model contest. The Marv Kershner Award, sponsored by the South Mountain Division, singles out creativity in modeling. To win the Blue Lantern, Terry Nesbit, the award's sponsor, demands the modeler use his or her modeling skills to do some scratchbuilding and produce a model of a short, private, or branch line. The Favorite Train Award, sponsored by the Tidewater division, will be there as well. Let's see

some narrow gauge entries here and some scales other than HO!

The next time you see this column, we hope to be able to announce a special photo contest and award for Potomac Junction. If a member has any suggestions for a permanent photo contest award that could be offered at each MER convention, and a sponsoring group that would be interested in initiating an award plaque, please contact Pete Shatswell, our new Photo Contest Chair. His e-mail is: [pasowl@aol.com](mailto:pasowl@aol.com). Pete is a knowledgeable and very skilled photographer. He's a member of the James River Division and was part of the host committee that welcomed us in 2002 to Richmond for our MER spring convention. Pete replaces Jim Atkinson, who has stepped down after several years of dedicated service as Photo contest chief. Thanks, Jim. Welcome, Pete!

Finally, I would like to ask you to think about how you might serve your region as a volunteer at the 2006 National convention to be held in Philadelphia, PA. The convention – Independence Junction, 2006 – is being sponsored by the Philadelphia Division and aided and abetted by the MER. A successful convention at any level requires volunteers – for a National convention, lots of volunteers. You will be hearing more than you perhaps want to hear about IJ2006 over the next three years. But I would like all the members of the region to begin thinking now about how they might contribute to making this a really successful convention. *Segue...*

Dick Landt, our MER Model Contest Chairman, Carl Haslett, an officer in the New Jersey Division, Rita Lynam (our always present and definitely dependable volunteer in the contest room at our conventions), and myself are the Executive Committee for the IJ2006 Contests. **We are looking for volunteers to help us with the national contests in 2006.** Specifically, we need volunteers to help members **check in** models, photos, and crafts items. We also need **data entry** personnel familiar with Windows-based Excel spreadsheet programs. And there has to be at least one member out there who knows how to **merge documents** in a Windows-based Word and Excel system in order to aid in data recovery, setting up, and printing certificates. We more than welcome anyone who wants to help out with the contests. Don't know what or how? We can teach you. We also promise you a pleasant working environment, the cheerful camaraderie of other modelers, and even some perks which will make your job-site tasks more enjoyable. Talk with us, please! Contact me at [raybilodeaujr@aol.com](mailto:raybilodeaujr@aol.com) or call (302) 636-0888.

# ELECTION CANDIDATES for DIRECTOR

Well, here it is, election time again. This year we have the three Director positions open, and just the three incumbent candidates.

Personally, I think they've done a fine job their past term, but I would still like to see some additional candidates.

Next year, remember, the election is for the officers.

— Clint Hyde, VP



Bob Minnis

## CALLBOARD — *Coming Events*

Notices must be typed and have complete addresses. Use the style shown below and be as brief as possible. Be sure to include a contact telephone number. Send items for CALLBOARD to Alan Mende, 526 Pine Hill Road, Hummelstown, PA 17036-8020 E-Mail to [afmende@amp.com](mailto:afmende@amp.com).

May 24-25, and July 12, 2003, Noon to 4 PM. Northern Virginia Model Railroaders, Inc. open house. Located in historic Washington & Old Dominion Railroad station, 231 Dominion Road (at the intersection with Ayr Hill Road), Vienna, VA. There is no admission charge, though donations are accepted. More information can be obtained by going to our web site at <http://www.nvmr.org>, by e-mail at [nvmrinc@hotmail.com](mailto:nvmrinc@hotmail.com) or by calling 703-938-5157 on the day of the open house. The club meets on Tuesday evenings.

May 16-18, 2003. 20th annual Narrow Gauge Module Meet to be held in Kimberton, PA (just west of Valley Forge Park). This meet is sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Narrow Gauge Guild. At this meet, narrow gauge modules in numerous scales, Nn3 through G, will be assembled for a weekend of operation. A raffle will also be held for a framed and mounted Ted Rose print "Mount Union Train". Proceeds benefit the Friends of the East Broad Top restoration fund. For additional details, log on to our web page at: <http://midatlanticng.railfan.net/modmeet.html> or contact Bob Beebe at [Ngrailroad@aol.com](mailto:Ngrailroad@aol.com) or by phone at 610-666-6711 (leave message).

A Lionel train set received as a Christmas present when I was about eight ignited my interest in model railroading. In my early teen years, on a visit to the local hobby shop, a Globe boxcar kit grabbed my interest, and I have been a HO modeler ever since. College and a military career limited my modeling activities for a few years. I was fortunate to be involved in the startup of two military related model railroad clubs, one of which is still in existence. I joined the NMRA 35 years ago and have been a life member of both the MER and NMRA for the past 5 years. I have also served as Superintendent and Paymaster of the Potomac Division.

I continue to enjoy the various disciplines within the hobby. Two favorite tasks are the building and detailing freight car and structure kits. Additionally, I enjoy meeting the public at the many modular set-ups at which I have participated and talking to them about this fascinating hobby. As one of the Region Directors during the past two years, I have served as a volunteer at all of the conventions, been an active member of the Budget committee, and attended every Board meeting. The Region is financially strong. Stagnant membership is a concern if the Region and the National are to continue to grow. We need to keep our current members and recruit new ones. If re-elected for another term, I will give membership recruitment and retention my highest priority. Thank you for your continued support. VOTE. (PS I still have that boxcar.)



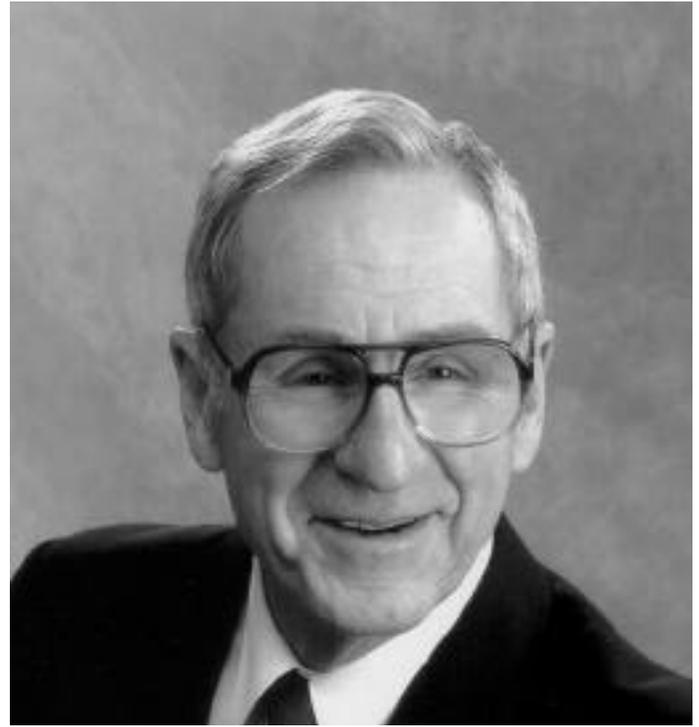
Noll Horan

Like most of us, it all started with a Lionel train set. In my case it was back in 1949, my first Christmas. I joined Northern Virginia Ntrak in 1996. I was elected to their Board of Directors in 1998 as a Member-at-Large, became Secretary in 1999 and just finished my two-year term as its club President. Now my energies for NVNtrak will be helping with the N Scale East National Convention in August 2004.

I joined the NMRA, MER, and the Potomac Division in 1999 after the fall Convention in Hagerstown. Since joining, I have attended all conventions, being active with the modular layouts and the Contest/Achievement Programs. I was appointed to the MER Board of Directors as a Member-at-Large in January 2001, filling out the term of the position. Having been elected in the fall of 2001, I am now seeking my second term.

I feel strongly about the AP Program – having participated in it – as it helps all of us to become better modelers through participation and sharing our skills. I have helped with AP judging which is a very valuable experience. I also believe in convention participation. I was on the Richmond Rails Committee in 2002 and am currently helping the Potomac Division with our Potomac Junction '03 Convention this coming fall.

I feel the MER can become one of the premier Regions of the NMRA through better involvement, recruitment with the community, in and outside of the model railroad groups. I look forward to being a part of that development of the Mid-Eastern Region.



Roger Cason

I have enjoyed serving as a member of your Board of Directors, and look forward to serving for a second term. As a Director, my responsibilities have included representing the Contest Committees and the Budget Committee. In addition, I am serving as the MER Achievement Program Manager and the Car Project Coordinator. Past service has included writing a regular column in *The Local*, organizing a Division meet, serving as a layout host, and helping in various capacities at MER conventions.

In my "non-railroad life", I am a consultant and trainer for a variety of nonprofit organizations (sometimes as a volunteer, sometimes for modest pay). I currently serve as Treasurer of a local performing arts organization, and have served in virtually every leadership position in the Wilmington Power Squadron, a boating organization. I believe this experience gives me a perspective that is useful to a nonprofit organization such as the MER.

If reelected, I intend to stress strengthening the Divisions, being responsive to members' questions and concerns, making sound decisions in connection with the impending National changes, and "making things run smoothly" in an administrative sense as an aid to member retention.

**BALLOT IN THE  
NEXT ISSUE!**

**MID-EASTERN REGION, NMRA, INC.**  
**9 Roosevelt Ave.**  
**Wilmington, DE 19804-3044**

Non-profit  
 Organization  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 York, PA  
 Permit No. 200

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

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**MER Special Car Order Form**



Car	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE *	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#29290	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$ _____
#29299	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$ _____
TOTAL				\$ _____
Shipping: _____ Cars, @ \$2.50 for first car, \$1.50 for each additional car				\$ _____
* MY MER # IS _____		TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____		

These 40' Western Maryland box cars are Micro-Train bodies custom painted by The Freight Yard. They are box cars with prominent white "speed lettering".

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO MID EASTERN REGION.

MAIL TO:  
 THE MID-EASTERN REGION INC.  
 Business Manager  
 9 Roosevelt Ave.  
 Wilmington, DE 19804-3044

**Ship to:** NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

The Mid-Eastern Region Inc., NMRA  
 An IRS Tax Exempt Organization  
 Business Manager  
 9 Roosevelt Ave.  
 Wilmington, DE 19804-3044

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/DUES RENEWAL NOTICE**  
 YOU MUST BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION  
 TO BE A MEMBER OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip (+4) \_\_\_\_\_  
 email \_\_\_\_\_  
 NMRA # \_\_\_\_\_ Expire Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 MER # \_\_\_\_\_ Expire Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Scale \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tel # \_\_\_\_\_

Remittance Enclosed for:  
 NMRA Dues:  New  Renewal \_\_\_\_\_  
 1 year: \$45.00  2 years: \$90.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Life membership cost is based on your age. Send your Birth Date to the NMRA for a quotation.*  
 Region Dues:  New  Renewal \_\_\_\_\_  
 1 year: \$8.00  2 years: \$16.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Life membership cost is based on your age. Send your Birth Date to the MER for a quotation. Only NMRA Life Members qualify for MER Life Membership*  
 MER Lapel Pin/Tie Tack @ \$6 each \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 MER Cloth Patch @ \$3 each \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to the Mid-Eastern Region